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COMMISSION'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL PROGRAMMES AND TO ORGANIZATION'S PROGRAMMES DESIGNED TO ASSIST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES OF OTHER REGIONS

Note by the Executive Secretary

1. The efforts to make a more visible contribution to the Organization's global programmes, mostly preparations for the United Nations global conferences, have been intensified since the last session. Consultations with other regional commissions are being held regularly in order to strengthen interaction through programmes aimed at socio-economic development of developing countries of other regions. The present note provides a short account of those activities.

I. GLOBAL PROGRAMMES

A. International Conference on Population and Development

2. As a follow-up to the European Population Conference, organized jointly by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Council of Europe, and the United Nations Population Fund and held in Geneva in March 1993, the recommendations of the Conference were transmitted to the Preparatory Committee for International Conference on Population and Development, which used them, at its second session held in May 1993 in New York, as one of inputs into initial discussions of the structure and content of the final document of the International Conference. The ECE will be represented both at the forthcoming final meeting of the Preparatory Committee and at the International Conference itself.

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B. Preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women

3. Document E/ECE/1298 containing an update of the Commission's activities to implement Commission decision K (48) on the ECE's contribution to the preparatory work for the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995, will be issued after the thirty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (7-18 March 1994).

4. In line with decision K (48), the High-level regional preparatory meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women will be held at the Vienna International Centre from 17 to 21 October 1994. It is the first time that an ECE meeting at the intergovernmental level is to take place in preparation for UN Conferences on Women. The organizational, fund-raising and consultative process has been initiated for this purpose.

5. The secretariat has prepared a minimum cost-estimate for its activities in relation to the meeting at a level of US$ 240,600 and established a Trust Fund providing a channel through which Governments and other donors may contribute to this budget. The total pledged to the Trust Fund by member States to date is approximately US$ 143,000 of which US$ 55,000 have been received. The following member States have announced financial contributions: Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Liechtenstein, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States.

6. The secretariat has initiated a process of informal consultations to elaborate an outline of the provisional agenda for the regional preparatory meeting. On the basis of a first version prepared by the secretariat, two informal consultative meetings open to all delegations were held on 13 and 27 January 1994. The secretariat has thus received very useful comments and suggestions on the basis of which the outline was revised. Subsequently the revised outline of the draft agenda was submitted to the Ad hoc Informal Meeting of the Commission on 31 January 1994. The member States expressed their agreement with the basic structure of the draft agenda on this occasion, on the understanding that the specifications relating to each agenda item may be further refined.

7. The Executive Secretary established a secretariat task force in October 1993. The Task Force has 14 members and is chaired by the Deputy Executive Secretary. Its task consists of steering the substantive preparations for the Meeting, providing guidance for the accreditation process of NGOs without consultative status and contributing to other preparatory activities for the meeting.

8. Its substantive work is based on the knowledge base of ECE and is complemented by information, data and analyses from national institutions, intergovernmental organizations, academic circles and ad hoc consultancy work.

9. An informal interagency meeting was convened on 14 February 1994 in which 21 organizations participated (Centre for Human Rights, UNICEF, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNV, UNEP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNRISD, ITC, ILO, FAO, UNESCO, WHO, IMF, UNIDO, IOM, Commission of the European Community, Council of Europe, Interparliamentary Union, Non-Governmental Liaison Service).

10. The organizations represented reported on their activities as they related to the substantive items contained in the outline of the draft agenda.

Furthermore, they expressed their commitment to support preparatory work of the secretariat through various forms of cooperation: providing existing data and analytic studies, undertaking joint studies with the secretariat on specific topics, and elaborating notes synthesizing, in a forward-looking approach, the main lessons and conclusions drawn from their respective work on the main issues to be discussed at the Vienna meeting.

11. The secretariat has established regular contacts with the ECE/NGO Working Group in order to ensure the participation of NGOs in the meeting, as requested in paragraph 3 of decision K (48). In compliance with the guidelines provided by the Secretary-General of the Conference, the Commission is responsible for the accreditation of NGOs without consultative status at the regional meeting. The secretariat will apply the established criteria for screening NGOs requesting such accreditation. It will subsequently submit a list of NGOs to the Commission for decision in this respect.

12. The secretariat has also established interaction with the NGO Planning Committee in Geneva, Vienna and New York.

13. The ECE secretariat has contacted all national machineries for the advancement of women in the region as well as the National Committees/focal points which have been established so far.

14. In order to prepare the report on the Review and Appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies (item 4 of the outline of the draft agenda), the ECE secretariat should receive the national reports by the end of April. Parts of these reports could be sent to the secretariat prior to the finalization of the documents in order to be taken into consideration in the substantive preparations for the meeting.

15. As stipulated by decision K (48) the regional preparatory meeting is aimed at providing a regional contribution to the fourth World Conference on Women, which would emphasise the role of women in economy, particularly in countries in transition; it would also provide recommendations for the region itself, preferably in the form of a European Plan of Action.

16. The Department of Public Information (DPI) has prepared a public information strategy for the Fourth World Conference on Women, which includes the support to regional preparatory meetings. As the preparations for the High-level regional meeting progress, the ECE secretariat will prepare guidelines, fact sheets and press releases with the support of DPI in Geneva and New York, to assist ECE member States in disseminating relevant information in their national information media.

C. World Summit for Social Development

17. General Assembly resolution 47/92 calls for the convening of the World Summit for Social Development which will take place in Copenhagen from 6 to 12 March 1995. The Summit should address three core thematic clusters related to social integration, particularly of the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups, reduction of poverty and productive employment. Resolution 47/92 requested the regional commissions to contribute to the preparations by emphasizing the social situation in their respective regions and to prepare an integrated report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session.

18. The Commission's mandate remains restricted to economic issues. However, as the multifaceted activities of the Commission could not be carried out in isolation from social trends, the ECE has developed a knowledge base in a variety of social areas, primarily in population and statistics and the impact of economic changes on social variables.

19. Following the joint report prepared for the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, the joint contribution of all five regional commissions, covering the major thematic clusters, has been prepared for submission to the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Summit.

20. The short contribution by ECE centres on selected social issues in the region, i.e. labour markets and labour/related relative poverty, and population trends including social integration of selected population groups, particularly aging, women, migrants and disabled.

21. Inputs by ECE were provided for the proposed Elements for possible inclusion in the Draft Declaration and Plan of Action being prepared by the Preparatory Committee, underlying the need of putting more emphasis on the interrelationship between major economic and social issues, such as integration into the global economy of countries in transition, support to transition processes, including strengthening of social safety nets, promoting investment and entrepreneurship.

22. The ECE participated in the interagency consultations in Geneva during the ECOSOC session, pointing out that there is no need for the regional preparatory meeting, since the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Social Affairs was held in Bratislava 28 June-2 July 1993, with ECE participation. The Conference called for an increased interaction in economic and social fields among ECE, United Nations bodies and agencies, Council of Europe, EC, OECD and CSCE. The Conference also requested ECE to bring to the attention of the Conference of European Statisticians the proposal of the Commission for Social Development (Vienna 1993) to create a system of indicators in the area of social development.

23. The host government - Slovakia - was requested to submit the report to the Preparatory Committee for the World Social Summit. In order to contribute meaningfully to the preparations for the Summit the ECE held consultations with regional commissions, UNRISD, WIDER of the UNV, and Social Welfare Policy Centre in Vienna.

24. The regional commissions proposed to sumbit to ECOSOC a joint document, based on previous submissions, which should be issue-oriented to cover major thematic clusters. This would secure a greater role for the regional commissions in the preparations for the World Social Summit. The Organizational Committee of ECOSOC supported this initiative.

D. Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

25. The Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States will be held in Bridgetown (Barbados) from 25 April to 6 May 1994. The ECE has monitored preparations and has submitted inputs for the background reports prepared by the Conference secretariat. Following the outcome of the Conference the ECE could continue cooperation with the

Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development by sharing its experiences in the environment and energy related fields of interest to small island developing States.

E. International Year of the Family

26. In response to Assembly resolution 46/92, which invited the regional commissions to exert all possible efforts in preparation for the observance of the Year, the ECE collaborated with the Secretariat for the IYF to convene the European and North American Preparatory Meeting for the IYF, which was held in Malta in April 1993. The ECE contributed a paper to the meeting on fertility and family trends and patterns, and family policies in the ECE region. The meeting was addressed by a representative of the ECE.

F. United Nations Conference on Human Settlements

27. Assembly resolution 47/180 called for the convening of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. The ECE secretariat participated in the first preparatory meeting for the Conference held in New York in March 1993.

28. Recalling Assembly resolution 47/180 the Committee on Human Settlements at its fifth-fourth session in September 1993 prepared a draft decision for the Commission on the ECE preparations for Habitat II, including the convening of a high-level regional preparatory meeting. The Committee also decided to hold an informal consultation of heads of delegations in Geneva on 8 April 1994, on the eve of the Preparatory Conference for Habitat II.

29. Other relevant decisions were taken to facilitate technical preparations for Habitat II in the ECE member States, such as preparation of national monographs, guidelines for sustainable human settlements planning and management, cadastre and land registration systems and modernization policies.

G. ECE contribution to the Commission on Sustainable Development

30. The Commission has formally adopted sustainable development as a guiding principle for all relevant activities of the ECE. In pursuance to paragraph 1 of decision F (48), the Principal Subsidiary Bodies are promoting this principle by integrating environmental concerns and considerations into their projects and programmes. They are also taking into account relevant conclusions and recommendations contained in the documents of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), in particular Agenda 21, in their programmes of work. In accordance with the provisions of Assembly resolution 47/191, the ECE Action Plan to Implement Agenda 21, which received the general approval of the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems, was transmitted to the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development for its second session in May 1994 (paragraph 6 of decision F (48)). The ECE secretariat has prepared substantive contributions for inclusion in the documentation of the Commission on Sustainable Development, particularly in the fields of international legal instruments and mechanisms and environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals.

II. ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES OF OTHER REGIONS

31. Many elements of the on-going ECE programmes could be of relevance to promote cooperation within and outside the United Nations to assist developing

countries of other regions. The consultative process with other regional commissions and UNDP has been intensified in order to develop joint programmes, provided the additional financial support is identified and provided.

32. Some major programmes such as Energy Efficiency and Trade Facilitation have been considered as possible areas of cooperation with other regional commissions.

A. Global Energy Efficiency 21

33. The proposed Global Energy Efficiency 21 (GEE 21), is based upon the approach successfully undertaken by the Energy Efficiency 2000 Project (EE 2000) within the ECE. The EE 2000 Project was designed to increase awareness of possibilities of saving energy and to enhance trade and cooperation in energy efficient environmentally sound technology practices among ECE participating states, in particular between formerly centrally planned economies and the market economies. There is a need to develop a more systematic exchange of experience and technical know-how among countries of the other regions of the world in order to achieve energy efficiency and contribute to the protection of the atmosphere within the framework of Agenda 21 and the Convention on Climate Change, the major outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). It is proposed to extend the Energy Efficiency 2000 Project concept whereby interested member States in each of the other regional commissions would undertake a similar initiative. This will necessarily involve modifications to activities in each region to reflect the local context and there will also be increased emphasis on capacity building.

34. Representatives from the Energy Divisions of the regional commissions together with interested donor delegations met in Geneva twice in 1992 for Ad Hoc meetings to discuss and confirm the interest of countries in a global approach. This broad project plan was approved by the Ad Hoc Meeting. Work is now underway to develop the regional plans to account for local conditions and to convene a meeting of interested countries and donors in each region in the near future. It was agreed at the Ad Hoc meeting that the individual Regional Energy Efficiency programmes need to have a regular link amongst themselves, in the form of an Inter-regional Steering Committee, served by a small secretariat, which would act as a place for concentration on methods of operation and for coordination with, inter alia, other initiatives and programmes resulting from UNCED through the Commission for Sustainable Development and/or the ECOSOC Energy Committee. These five regional Energy Efficiency Projects (including the existing EE 2000 Project), combined with the Inter-regional Steering Committee, would compose the project entitled Global Energy Efficiency 21. During its third session held in November 1993, the Committee on Energy requested the secretariat to convene the Steering Committee of the Global Energy Efficiency 21 Project in consultation with other regional commissions and relevant United Nations bodies and agencies. The UNDP has been contacted for support to convene such a meeting.

B. Trade Facilitation

35. Trade facilitation has been successfully institutionalized in the developed countries, while few developing countries made advances in elimination of procedural impediments to trade, particularly trade

documentation. The ECE promotes the idea of trade facilitation among developing countries.

36. The ECE Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procudures has developed over the years into a forum for interregional discussions. In order to secure better coordination of activities on development and implementation of the United Nations rules for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT), regional Rapporteurs for Pan-America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Australia/New Zealand, Africa and Asia were appointed by the Working Party. The rapporteurs have established regional EDIFACT Boards in India, Korea, Malaysia, China, Singapore and Thailand, while observers include Mongolia, Philippines and Hongkong.

37. In view of the global importance of trade facilitation for improving international trade flows, ECOSOC has called on the regional commissions to formulate, jointly, with UNCTAD, a project for interregional cooperation that would promote the reduction, simplification and harmonization of formalities, procedures and documentation through the phased application of UN/EDIFACT.

38. Close cooperation has been maintained between ECE and UNCTAD within their Special Programme on Trade Efficiency, allowing the two organizations to gain the advantage of the combined resources of both secretariats. The results of ECE work are also disseminated in developing countries through UNCTAD technical cooperation activities.

C. United Nations International Comparison Programme

39. Within the context of the International Comparison Programme (ICP), the ECE countries as partner in the joint venture cooperate with the European Union, OECD and Austria to secure international comparison of prices and national accounts. This programme of cooperation covers, in addition to most ECE and OECD countries, a number of developing countries with the support of the World Bank.

40. Indirectly, ECE work in statistics contributes to the statistical work of other regional commissions. A case in point is the ECE decision on the fundamental principles of official statistics, which was widely commented in all regions and is expected to be adopted by the UN Statistical Commission.

D. Other relevant programmes

41. In the field of statistics, ECE continues to provide assistance to developing countries through the transfer of results and know-how of the joint ECE/UNDP Statistical Computing Project Phase 2 (SCP-2). SCP 2 final products are disseminated to other regional commissions and developing countries in all regions of the world.

42. In the field of agriculture, joint ECE/FAO Working Parties provide direct contribution to the FAO programme of cooperation with developing countries in food statistics, land use, farm management, soil fertility, water resources and fertilizers. Developing countries also benefit from the work on standardization for their products and quality control for export.

43. In the transport area ECE continues cooperation with ECA and ESCAP in the activities related to the Transport and Communication Decade for Africa and Asia.

44. Several technical publications and newsletters include information of relevance to developing countries and their wider distribution and use should be further enhanced in cooperation with the regional commissions and organizations within and outside the United Nations system.

45. The trend of an increased interest and participation of representatives from developing countries in meetings organized by ECE has also been noted.